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PROGRAMME-LEVEL ACTIVITIES AND SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ASSISTANCE

Role of the United Nations Development Programme in humanitarian affairs

Report of the Administrator

I. PURPOSE

1. The present report describes the progress made (a) by the Disaster Management Training Programme in promoting capacity-building in the field of disaster mitigation; (b) in the substantive and technical role played by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in support of the transition from relief through rehabilitation to sustainable human development; (c) in supporting resident coordinators in their role in this transition and in their emergency function; and (d) in cooperation with the United Nations Department for Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) and other organizations of the United Nations system.

II. DISASTER MANAGEMENT TRAINING PROGRAMME

2. The Disaster Management Training Programme (DMTP), co-managed by UNDP and DHA, is a national and international disaster mitigation and capacity-building mechanism. This programme, with the assistance of professional disaster management institutions, has developed sophisticated, well-structured training modules that cover the major categories and phases of natural disasters and complex emergencies. Since its inception in 1991, 40 trainers from UNDP, DHA and United Nations organizations have had their skills upgraded and six regional cooperating institutions now implement training programmes as executing agencies. Twenty-eight workshops have been held and attended by nearly 1,500 participants from national governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), United Nations organizations, regional institutions and bilateral donors.

Follow-up projects, with support from Special Programme Resources (SPR), are being implemented in 15 countries.

3. The first phase of the DMTP will come to an end in mid-1994. A mid-term review and an internal evaluation has been completed. UNDP and DHA staff, together with a team of international experts, are currently preparing the second phase of the programme - MARK 2 - which will build on previous experience by reinforcing the importance of building national capacity for disaster prevention, mitigation and management. Over the past year, UNDP and DHA have broadened their DMTP partnership and included the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in the design and formulation of the next phase of the programme.

III. SUBSTANTIVE AND TECHNICAL ROLE OF UNDP IN THE RELIEF-TO-DEVELOPMENT CONTINUUM

4. Through its network of field offices, and with headquarters support, UNDP has been heavily involved in reconstruction and rehabilitation work in countries affected by both natural disasters and complex emergencies. Recovery projects aimed at addressing problems of drought, floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions or typhoons have been successfully implemented. In post-conflict and complex emergencies, UNDP has led numerous rehabilitation programmes in Central America, Cambodia, Mozambique and Somalia, where several of the more complex problems have been addressed. These have included preparation of national plans for reconstruction, re-establishment of national planning capacities, reintegration of returnees and internally displaced persons, demobilization of militia and their return to normal social and economic life, demining as a prerequisite for agricultural development, rehabilitation of water supply systems and reconstruction of houses and settlements.

5. The increase in the number and severity of man-made disasters has highlighted the plight of war-torn societies and the demands on the international community in general, and the United Nations in particular, for efficient and effective responses to the difficult processes from relief through rehabilitation to sustainable human development. These new and growing demands, already echoed by the Governing Council, require UNDP to continue development of its substantive and technical capacity for support to these efforts.

6. In cooperation with the Government of Switzerland, the Administrator has formed a group of eminent consultants who are currently preparing a study on the UNDP role in the relief-to-development continuum. Several countries have been visited and interviews conducted in the field with hundreds of officials and specialists from governments of affected countries, United Nations organizations, international financial institutions, bilateral donors, NGOs and academic institutions. This study will be completed in April 1994. The Administrator will inform the Executive Board later this year of its findings as well as his recommendations for UNDP policy and operational guidelines.

IV. ROLE OF RESIDENT COORDINATORS IN EMERGENCIES

7. The Administrator has further reinforced the process of selecting well-qualified, experienced, senior staff members for the position of Resident Coordinator in either complex emergencies or in seriously disaster-prone countries. These efforts are in direct response to General Assembly resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991, which, in paragraph 39 of the annex states, inter alia, that "the resident coordinator should normally coordinate the humanitarian assistance of the United Nations system at the country level". The Administrator and the Humanitarian Programme are cooperating closely with DHA in this regard and the Administrator has expanded the pool of eligible candidates with qualified staff from other operational agencies. Most recently, for example, the UNDP Resident Representative and United Nations Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh has come from UNICEF and the same position in Angola is now filled by a former WFP staff member. Former UNDP staff members are serving as Humanitarian Coordinators in Somalia, Mozambique, Iraq and other places.

8. The complex and demanding responsibilities of disaster management and coordination have made it necessary to maintain a streamlined structure with the Resident Coordinator undertaking responsibilities as the Humanitarian Coordinator and, reporting in that capacity, to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs. It is also necessary to maintain close consultation with DHA and United Nations operational agencies in selecting candidates for that position who enjoy the full confidence and support of the system as a whole.

9. UNDP country offices are always in the forefront of responses to emergencies. The Resident Representative/Resident Coordinator can mobilize the necessary support in response to a natural disaster of relatively short duration. However, in complex emergencies, particularly when emergency support units are established and the consolidated appeals process launched, UNDP financial and human resources are often overstretched. In addition to more active responses by other operational agencies, UNDP is examining new and innovative measures to provide appropriate support for its offices in such countries.

V. COOPERATION WITH DHA AND OTHER UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATIONS

10. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee, under the chairmanship of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, has formed two inter-agency working groups to examine the role of the United Nations system in the relief-to-development continuum. UNDP is chairing and providing substantive and organizational support for Working Group I, dealing with the operational framework for the role of the United Nations system in the relief-to-development continuum. The Working Group has had three sessions and will complete its work at the end of March 1994.

11. UNDP maintains excellent and close cooperation with DHA in all humanitarian affairs matters and fully supports and assists DHA in its lead role in coordinating relief and other humanitarian operations in affected countries. UNDP also cooperates fully with the Department for Political Affairs and the

Department for Peace-keeping Operations of the United Nations Secretariat, as well as with the United Nations Security Coordinator.

VI. EXECUTIVE BOARD ACTION

12. The Executive Board may wish to:

Take note of the present report.